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A MODERN METER OF EGYPTIAN-ARABIC VERSE

By W. H. T. GAIRDNER

Cairo, Egypt

Despite the exhortations of Western savants, colloquial Arabic cannot yet be said to be employed for literary purposes. The colloquial only reaches print in the comic papers, which cannot be called literature. In these papers poems of a sort are frequent, most of them purely comic and frivolous. But, as *satire* is sometimes a serious affair, it happens that some of the satirical odes which appear in such papers come nearer to being serious and literary than anything else that is written in the colloquial.

A specimen of these odes is given below, because of two points of philological interest which emerge from it.

1. The first point is that the meter, though not precisely identical with any other classical meters, is perfectly regular, and bears a strong resemblance to the classical meter called *sarīʿ*:—*mustafʿilun*, *mustafʿilun*, *fāʿilun* in both hemistichs. Indeed, if *fāʿilun* were replaced by *faʿlun* in the second hemistich we should have a true *sarīʿ*.¹ The meter of our ode may be diagrammatized as follows:

$\begin{array}{cccc} \asymp & - & \cup & - \\ - & \cup & \cup & - \end{array}$
 $\begin{array}{cccc} \asymp & - & \cup & - \\ - & \cup & \cup & - \end{array}$
 $\asymp \cup -$ in both hemistichs.

The arrangement of the rhyme of its five-line stanzas is *a b a b c*, where *c* persists throughout the ode, while *a b* changes in each stanza.

2. But a more notable point is that the perfect regularity of the meter depends upon its being read *precisely according to the laws of elision, etc., which govern Egyptian colloquial speech*. It comes as a wonderful vindication of the assertions of western writers on Egyptian colloquial with respect to these laws, especially as they have been recently elaborated in the writer's *Egyptian Colloquial Arabic* (pp. 36, 37), to find that these verses can only be scanned when these deduced laws are applied with the utmost completeness. No more satisfactory or complete vindication can be imagined of the assertion

¹ Except that the alternative \cup in the first syllable of the second and third feet would not be permissible. Another way to regard this meter would be as a sort of *ragaz*.

that Egyptians, when they speak, do in fact speak according to these laws. Among the principles thus consistently carried out¹ are: (a) the dropping of final vowels except where a word ends in two consonants; (b) the insertion of a passing vowel when a word ends in two consonants, e.g., *hamm*ⁱ (l. 4); (c) the elision of short, unaccented, open *i* or *u* when preceded by an open syllable, e.g., *kidbu* for *kidibu* (l. 60), *mihāmi bta^{na}* for *mihāmi bita^{na}* (l. 61); (d) the shortening of a naturally long syllable before two consonants, when *i* has been elided for the reason just mentioned, e.g., *ḥafz* (*ḥāfiz* > *ḥāfz*) (l. 62); and generally, e.g., *rasūl* for *rasūl* (l. 2); (e) practical abolition of *hamzatu l qat^c*, e.g., *w umm is surur* for *wi^uumm* (l. 8); (f) the loss of length through the loss of accent, e.g., *goz* for *gōz* (l. 41), and *dayⁱni* for *dāyⁱni* (in the same line); (g) the restoration of length when accent is restored, e.g., *wafā li* (l. 7), where but for the enclitic *li* we should have *wāfa*.

The very fact that the Egyptians are unconscious of this regularity is only an additional proof that these matters are the essence of the colloquial language, not accidents of it, and are therefore obligatory and not optional to whoso desires to speak that language well.

The few exceptions to the above general statement are clearly only the momentary influence of the literary language.

Specimen of the scansion:

Ählān wī sāh|lān yā bāshī|r_īl hānā||

¹ Naturally it is the meter, not the *character* that proves this, for the poem is printed in unvoweled Arabic. A hint, however, is every now and then dropped by the Arabic characters themselves, e.g., ف في, l. 26.

SA'DAK¹ ZAHAR, YA MAŞR¹, FIL MUṢTAMAR

- 1 Ahlan wi sahlan, ya bashīr_{il} hanā,
 Rasūl ḥabīb_i illi samah bil wişāl!
 Ṣarēt "Ṣalam nashrah?" wi nult il munā,
 Wil hammⁱ zāl, wil ḥuznⁱ shāl_{il} ṣizāl;
 Balaghtⁱ Ṣaşdi wil Ṣazūl_{intaḥar}.
- 6 Wāgib Ṣalayya_l yom_{awaffi}_n nudūr
 Lamma wafā li munyatⁱ bil wuṣūd;
 W_{umm} is surūr Ṣala l ḥabāyib tidūr,
 W_{afrah} wi ṭālīṣ bakhti saḍ is suṣūd,
 Wi muṭribi_{yghannī} li "Ṣunsak ḥadar!"
- 11 Mush ṭultⁱ lak ya Ṣalbi kullu yizūl,
 Bēn in nahār wil lēl yisawwa l Ṣagab?
 Mush ṭultⁱ lak ya Ṣalbi Ṣusbur tinūl
 ṢAşdak wi baḍ il ḥuznⁱ yīgi ṭ ṭarab?
 Shūf il Ṣagab min mudhishāt il qadar!
- 16 ṢĀlu_l Ṣawāzil "Ṣurbi ḥubbik biṣḍ,"
 Lamma raṢū_{ghyābu} Ṣan iṣ ṣabbi ṭāl;
 Lamma raṢū shōṢi wi wagdi yizid:
 Ma yiṣlamūsh_{il} ḥāl dawāmu muḥāl?
 Sēr il liyālī kullu ḥikma_w Ṣibar.
- 21 Tibāt Ṣalā farsh il humūm wiṣ ṣiṣām,
 Wish shamsⁱ ṭilīṣ bish shifā wis surūr!
 Tibāt fi khōf wiṣ ṣubḥⁱ yīgi_b salām,
 Yīgi_l farag min baḍⁱ dīṣ iṣ ṣudūr!
 La buddⁱ ma_{ynūl}_{il} murām min ṣabar.
- 26 ṢĀlu "l Ṣagab! Ṣin nās tishūfu_f Ragab!"
 Kalām saḥfⁱ wi ṣidⁱ min ghēr kalām!
 Shufnāḥ wi zāl kullⁱ Ṣagab bis sabab,
 HaṢi kunna kullinā fi manām,
 Tafsīru khalla kasrⁱ khāṭri_{ngabar}.
- 31 Rūḥ yā Ṣazūli kullⁱ Ṣōlak faḍūl,
 Ahwāḥ wi jihwāni ḥabīb il fuṣād!
 Eh f_{ṣtizārak} baḍⁱ waṣlu tiṣūl?
 Baḍ is suḥād wil buḍⁱ tamm il murād,
 Tamm il murād, Ṣamma_{nta} Ṣufshur fashar!
- 36 Dayiṭini_w dayiṭu, Ṣamma saṣīl!
 Fuḍḍak min il Ṣōl il Ṣariḍ iṭ ṭawīl!
 Wi_b tiddiṣ daṣwa wala_lhash dalīl,
 Tiṣūl tiṣḍ; kullu kalam mistaḥīl!
 Di daṣwa baṭla Ṣandⁱ Ṣahl_{in} nazar.

¹ Saḍ, the name of Saḍ Pasha Zaghlūl, the Nationalist leader, means "Felicity."

TRANSLATION

THY FELICITY HAS BEEN MANIFEST, O EGYPT, AT THE CONFERENCE

- 1 Welcome, right welcome, O Evangelist of happiness,
 O messenger of my beloved, bringing consent to union!
 I have recited "Hath He not expanded (thy breast)?" and have obtained
 my desire;
 Anxiety has gone, and grief has removed its furniture;
 I have reached my object, and the Detested one has committed suicide.
- 6 I must this day perform my vows,
 Since my desire has performed for me my promises,
 And the Mother of Pleasure (wine) goes round among the friends,
 And I rejoice and have drawn Sa'd of Gladness for my lot,
 And my sweet singer sings to me "Thy joy has arrived!"
- 11 Did I not say to thee, my heart, Everything ceaseth,
 Between morn and evening every mystery is explained?
 Did I not say to thee, my heart, Have patience and thou shalt obtain
 Thy purpose, and after grief cometh delight?
 Behold, the mystery is among the marvels of Fate.
- 16 The Detested ones said, Far be the nearness of thy Love!
 When they saw how his absence from love was prolonged,
 When they saw my longing and my passion increase.
 Do they not know that the perpetuation of a changing state is impossible?
 The sequence of the evenings is itself a philosophy and instruction.
- 21 (For) you go to rest on the couch of sorrow and sickness,
 And the sun rises with healing and with joy.
 You go to rest in fear, and the morning comes with peace;
 Relief cometh after compression of the breast.
 He who waits patiently *must* obtain his desire.
- 26 They said, "A wonderful thing! 'Folk shall see it in Ragab.'"
 True word! truth without dispute!
 We *have* seen it, and the mystery has gone with that which caused it.
 Verily we were all of us in a dream;
 And its interpretation has caused my broken heart to be healed.
- 31 Go, O my Detested, all thy speech is superfluous,
 I desire him, and he desires me,—the beloved of my heart.
 What will you say to excuse yourself when we are united?
 After wakefulness and separation, our desire is fulfilled.
 Our desire is fulfilled; but as for you, drive! on!
- 36 You have annoyed me, you have annoyed him: oh wearisome!
 Cease from talk so long and broad!
 You pretend pretensions that have no proof;
 You state, repeat,—and 'tis all impossible talk,
 'Tis an empty claim in the judgment of the thoughtful.

- 41 Zaman goz_ummi kán dayi'ni kitir,
 Wi hiyya kánit minnu ṭalba ṭ ṭalā';
 Wi kutt_anā fil 'umrⁱ lissa ṣaghīr,
 Wi kunna daiman fi nizá' wif khinā',
 Wil 'ēsha kanit 'ēsha ghammⁱ_w kadar. .
- 46 Wi kan waṣī 'alayya ; ṭál ḥadritu,
 "Gawāza wi_wṣāya wi 'ēsha marār!
 Wi zeyyⁱ bēt il 'ankabút kilmitu,
 Balláf yibargilna fi 'izz in nahār,
 Wi ṭismu ma'rūf lil bulīs wil ghafar.
- 51 Allāh la yiḥrimna min il munṣifin,
 Illi yighīru 'al hu'ū' wish sharaf.
 Ḥa'ṭi inn_Allah ma'a_ṣ ṣābirin!
 Ifraḥ ba'ā_w ṭid in nagaf ya nagaf,
 W_ī'zim ba'a_ṣ ṣabwāt wi kull il 'itar!
- 56 'Aleh rafa'na da'wa fil mukhtalaṭ,
 'Ashan himāya_bta' dagal, maghrabi!
 Kunna_f minakfa wif ṭawanṭa wi labat,
 Akhritha wi_ḥyātak wi ha'ṭ_in nabi,
 Ma'ru wi talṭṭu wi kidbu zahar.
- 61 Kān_il miḥāmi_bta'na fādil nabīh,
 Ḥafz il 'anūn, ṭustāz fi 'ilm il ḥu'ū';
 Wi_l ṭāḍi kán 'ādil wi ṭāhir nazīh
 'An kullⁱ ṭāḍi fin nazāha yifū'
 Ḥukmu li sāliḥna bi 'adlu ṣadar!
- 66 Kisibt_anā w_ummi l ṭaḍiyya, wi kán
 Yóm 'id wi ḥannūna gamī' il girān.
 'Azūli, ṭaḥkī lak ḥikāya 'ashān,
 Tifham ma'āniha bidūn turgamān,—
 Kaman la bud tikūn simi't il khabar.
- 71 Biddi ṭaqúl lak w_inta 'ā'il labīb,
 Il gaddⁱ ghannā lu l hizár, ya zarīf!
 Ya Miṣrⁱ mā li shē khilāfik ḥabīb,
 W illi yilumni_f ḥubbi 'a'lu khafīf,
 Sa'dik zahar ya Miṣrⁱ fil muṭamar.
- 76 Shukr_il ṭilāh wāgib 'ala_l gamī' farḍⁱ 'ēn.
 Wil ḥamdu luh 'ala_l gamī' farḍⁱ 'ēn.
 Faḍlak wi gūdak yā Ḥamid ya Magīd,
 Bil Muṣṭafā gadd_il_Ḥasan wil Ḥusēn
 Ṭā-há_t Tuhāmi_l Hādi Sayyid Muḍar!

- 41 Long has my stepfather annoyed me utterly,
 While my mother, too, was ever demanding divorce of him;
 I was the while still a minor,
 And we were continually in strife and quarreling,
 And our life was a life of misery and trouble.
- 46 He was my guardian. Said that gentleman,
 "I have the marrying of him, and the guarding of him, and his life shall
 be bitter."
 His speech is as the spider's web.
 Sorcerer! he bespells me in full daylight;
 And his name is known to the police, and to the night watchman.
- 51 May Allah not deprive us of the equitable,
 Who have zeal for men's rights and honor!
 Verily "Allah is with the patient!"
 Rejoice therefore and light the chandeliers, my beauty,
 And go, bid the gallants, the "bloods" one and all.
- 56 We have brought an action against him in the Mixed Tribunals,
 For he is a protected subject—fraud! Westerner!
 We kept arguing, and blustering, and talking,
 And the end of it, by your life and the truth of the Prophet,
 Was that his bluff and fraud and falsehood were made manifest.
- 61 Our Counsel was an excellent, intelligent man,
 Learned in the law, a master of jurisprudence,
 And the judge was just, clean, uncorrupt,
 Surpassing all other judges in uncorruptness.
 And, in his justice, his sentence was given for *us*.
- 66 My mother and I won the suit: it was
 A day of festival; all the neighbors felicitated us.
 O Detested one! I'll tell thee a story, so that you may
 Understand its meaning without an interpreter,
 Besides, you must have already heard its matter.
- 71 I want to tell you, and you are rational and sensible—
 (Jest sings its song to Earnestness, my fine fellow)—
 O Egypt, I have no other beloved save *thee*,
 And whoso blames me for my love is a fool.
 Thy Sa'd (felicity) has been manifest, O Egypt, at the Conference.
- 76 Thanks to Allah is assuredly our duty,
 And praise to him is unconditionally incumbent on all.
 Give us thy favor and thy grace, O Praiseworthy, O Glorious one,
 Through Mustafa, the grandfather of Hassan and Hussein
 Tā-Hē, the Man of Tuhām, the True Guide, the Lord of Modar.

KHALEEL NAZEER

سعدك ظهريا مصر في المؤتمر

اهلا وسهلا يا بشير الهنا رسول حبيبي الى سمع بالوصال
 قريب (ألم نشرح) دنلت المنى والهم زال والحزن شال العزال
 بلغت قصدي والعذول انتحر
 واجب على اليوم أوفى الندور لما دنى لي منيق بالعود
 وام السرور على الجباب تدور واخرج وطالع بخي (سعد السعود)
 ومطري يغنى لي انك حضر
 مش قلت لك يا قلبي كله يزول بين النهار والليل يسوى العجب
 مش قلت لك يا قلبي أصبر تنول قصدك وبعد الحزن يحى الطرب
 شوف العجب من مد هشات القدر
 قالوا العواذل قرب حبك بعيد لما رأوا غيابه عن الصب طال
 لما رأوا شوقي ووجدني يزيد ما يعلموش الحال دوامه محال
 سير الليالي كله حكمه وعبر
 تبات على فرش الهوم والسقام والشمس تطلع بالشفا والسرور
 تبات في خوف والصبح يحى سلام يحى الفرج من بعد ضيق الصدور
 لا بد ما ينول المرام من صبر
 قالوا العجب الناس تشوفه ف رجب كلام صحيح وصدق من غير كلام
 شغناه وزال كل العجب بالسبب حقيقى كنا كلنا في منام
 تفسير خلا كسر خاطري انجبر
 روح يا عذولي كل قولك فضول أهواه ويهوا في حبيب الفؤاد
 إيه في اعتذارك بعد وصله تقول بعد السهاد والبعد تم المراد
 تم المراد أما انت أفش فشر
 ضايقتني وضايقتني أما ثقيل فضك من القول العريض الطويل
 وبتدعى دعوى ولا لهاش دليل تقول تعيد كله كلام مستحيل
 دى دعوى باطله عند اهل النظر

زمان جوز أمى كان ضايقتى كثير وهى كانت منه طالبة الطلاق
وكنت انا فى العمر لسه صغير وكنا دايمًا فى نزاع وف خناق
والعيشة كانت عيشة غم وكدر
وكان وصى علىّ قال حضرته جواره ووصايه وعيشه مرار
وزى بيت العنكبوت كلمته بلّاف يبرجلنا فى عز النهار

واسمه معروف للبليس والغفر
الله لا يحرمنا من المنصين الى يغيروا ع الحقوق والشرف
حقيقى (ان الله مع الصابرين) افرج بقى وقيد الخيف يا (نجف)
واعزم بقى الصبوات وكل العتر
عليه رنعت دعوى فى المختلط عشان حمايه بتاع دجل مغرب
كنا فى مناكفه وف أونطه ولبط آخرتها وحياتك وحق النبى
معره وتلفيقه وكذبه ظهر

كان المحامى بتاعنا فاضل نبيه حافظ القانون استاذ فى علم الحقوق
والتافى كان عادل وطار نزيه عن كل فاضى فى النزاهة ينفوق

حكمه لصالحنا بعدله صدر
كسبت أنا وأمى القضيه وكان يوم عيد وهنونا جميع الجيران
عذولى أحكى لك حكايه عشان تفهم معانيها بدون ترجمان
كيان لا بد تكون سمعت الخبر

بدى أقول لك وانت عاقل ليب الجد غفى له الهزار يا ظريف
يا مصر ماليش خلافاك حبيب والى يلومنى فى جبي عقله خفيف
سعدك ظهر يا مصر فى المؤتمر

شكر الاله واجب علينا أكيد والحمد له على الجميع فرض عين
فضلك وجودك يا حميد يا مجيد بالمصطفى جد الحسن والحسين
طه التهامى الهادى سيد مضر

خليل نظير